

So you can sit here and correct the RECORD all you want. What you think you are doing when you talk about the subject, we are talking about the legislation. And we need to know exactly what this legislation is going to do and how it is going to impact older Americans and our job creators.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. BOURDEAUX). Pursuant to House Resolution 716, the previous question is ordered on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLER).

The question is on the amendment.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appear to have it.

Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

Pursuant to clause 1(c) of rule XIX, further consideration on H.R. 3992 is postponed.

BUILD BACK BETTER NOW

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I just wanted to be able to really inform the American people and to let my friends on the other side of the aisle know what they are missing out on. And that is the greatest effort to improve the quality of life of Americans and raise their economic level of living since Social Security under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, since the Great Society under Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Working moms having the ability to not pay more than 7 percent of their income to get childcare. Young—just beginning school, three years old and four years old—and not one three- or four-year-old being left out of pre-K. Giving them the intellectual stairstep to make a difference in their lives.

And in the State of Texas—the poster child for the uninsured—oh, my goodness, how we have suffered: 766,000 uninsured refuse to take the expanded Medicaid. And now we have the ability to give every person healthcare. And when I spoke to a group that was supported by the American Heart Association, they applauded.

Build back better is what we need to do and we need to do it now and pass both bills, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill—changing lives in America.

NATIONALIZED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, one of the many concerning provisions in the Democrat's reconciliation bill is nationalization of our elementary schools.

The new childcare provisions drastically expand Federal oversight of schools, allowing the Biden administration to determine the education standards for three- to four-year-olds, and places no limit on what additional requirements Democrats can impose upon each States' primary education system.

This bill also delegitimizes family and faith-based education, by limiting funded preschool options to only facilities which teach curriculum that the Biden administration approves of.

The Secretary of Education recently told Congress that parents were not "the primary stakeholder" in "determining educational programming." Really? This means Democrats believe government knows better than what parents think is right for their children.

Allowing the nationalization of elementary schools will further politicize what our kids are being taught, such as divisive ideologies, like critical race theory, or exposed to very inappropriate instructional materials that I can't speak of here.

Madam Speaker, I cannot support a bill that would hand over more of our powers to the government, in an era where too many freedoms have already been relinquished.

DEMOCRATS NATIONALIZE EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Illinois (Mrs. MILLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and submit extraneous materials.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, last month the chair of the House Budget Committee, a member of Democratic leadership, told me during an education committee meeting that parents don't know what is best for their children. He said, "We need to protect kids from their parents."

Last night, in some of the bluest parts of our country, parents disagreed. Last night was a resounding victory for parental rights and the future of our country. Parents are fed up—where I am from, we say riled up. They bravely stood up against the Marxist ideology that has taken over the radical left.

Parents rejected racist critical race theory, teaching children that they are

victims. They rejected a perverted sexualized curriculum forced upon young children. Parts of this curriculum are so perverted that if you actually talked about it on the airwaves, you would be fined for indecency. Yet, this is what is included in some of our elementary education curriculum. And they rejected a transgender political agenda that puts young girls in danger in a girls' restroom and will be the end of girls' athletics.

In addition, they are being taught to hate our country, the land of freedom and opportunity. We want our children to be smart, to master the core subjects, and to love our neighbors and our country. Last night was only the beginning—a revolution of regular people. Never estimate the power of regular people to defend their country and their children and their freedom. American values will always defeat Marxist ideology.

The message from parents is loud and clear: Don't mess with our kids.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. FITZGERALD.)

Mr. FITZGERALD. Madam Speaker, I thank Congresswoman MILLER for yielding.

Madam Speaker, our Nation's students are the future. They are our future police officers, doctors, technicians, and manufacturers. And to accomplish this, students will need localized education that is sensitive to the thoughts and concerns of students, parents, and teachers. That is the system we have had in the United States of America for many years.

But lo and behold, inside this multi-trillion-dollar infrastructure budget reconciliation package that is being crafted right now, as we stand here this evening, there are plans—and I don't want to blow this out of proportion—to nationalize and radicalize our Nation's education system.

The Washington takeover of education would give the Biden administration unprecedented levels of Federal oversight and the ability to approve early education standards and provide childcare to wealthy families while pushing small providers out of the market.

This proposal comes at a time when across the country parents are already feeling a little bit cast aside or excluded from some of the major decisions that are being made in their children's education.

Students are being taught divisive and harmful curriculum. The one that is obviously at the forefront is CRT. When parents come to their local school board meetings to express their concerns, they have been met with hostility, and in some cases—extreme cases—they arrested a parent. It is crazy.

This is especially important for parents in Wisconsin, my home State. Parents are fed up with the bureaucracy telling them they—not the parents—know better. And when parents ask

what their children are being taught, they often get a very limited and unsatisfactory response.

So I came up, along with some of my colleagues, with a bill that we thought made sense; very easy, common sunshine-type of bill that ultimately would resolve many of these issues. We call it the CRT Transparency Act.

Madam Speaker, the bill requires schools to post their curriculums online so that parents can see what their students are being taught. Seems simple to me. Just post it online. You have got nothing to hide. It gives the parents the opportunity to see exactly what their children are being taught.

□ 1745

The merits of this bill, I think, would ultimately warrant no controversy. The bill doesn't ask school boards to make private information public. Elementary and secondary curriculums are already public information. The parents who wish to call their school districts and inquire can do that. The problem is, the onus should not be on the parents to jump through hoops to get this information. No matter what the class may be, the bottom line is that the parents have the right to easily access this information.

If schools aren't teaching divisive and backward curriculum, then there should be absolutely no reason not to make this information public. I have spoken to local education leaders back in southeastern Wisconsin, the Fifth Congressional District, who agree with the commonsense sentiment behind the proposals. Unfortunately, I think that President Biden, the Secretary of Education, and the Democrats don't agree, necessarily, with the parents having that much input. They certainly believe that they could bring influence to that entire educational system, which is not something they want.

That is why the attorney general issued a memo instructing the Justice Department to investigate parents speaking up at the local school boards. This is wrong. Despite what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle may believe, parents do have the right to speak up at school board meetings and complain and be vocal about what their children are being taught. In fact, this is the hallmark of being a good parent, right? You just don't want to send your kid off to class and not be involved in what they are involved in every day.

What we saw in Virginia last night sent an undeniably clear message. Those who embrace radical education policies and box out our parents do not represent what the American people want.

My colleagues across the aisle want you to believe that they prioritize students and education, but the text of this budget reconciliation will tell a very different narrative. A narrative that expands the Federal Government's role in education at the expense of good parenting and student outcomes.

I, and I think my Republican colleagues, will oppose any proposal that puts the bureaucracy before students.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOOD).

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Madam Speaker, last night was a great night for America. As Virginians across the Commonwealth, in bipartisan fashion, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, rejected the radical, woke, socialist education policies of this Biden administration and this complicit Democrat majority in this Congress.

Most of our schools will be better off being governed by the first seven ticked-off parents in line at the next school board meeting than the woke leftist, progressive, liberal members of the typical American school board.

The Federal Government should not be involved in education. There is no constitutional basis for the Federal Government to be involved in education to begin with. I love our friend, THOMAS MASSIE, our colleague from Kentucky's bill that says—of which I am a cosponsor—the Department of Education shall cease to exist on December 31 of 2022. How much better our schools, our children, our parents, and families would be if that were the case.

We are seeing the silver lining from the past 2 years with the China virus as the exposure has been there. What is being taught in the schools? The strong disinfectant of sunlight, letting parents see what their children are being taught as they supervise them learning from home.

And, thankfully, thousands and thousands of parents showing up at school board meetings to make their voices heard because they don't want critical race theory and its ideology taught in our schools. It is amazing how the Democrat majority and their allies, their friends in the media say: That doesn't exist.

It may be true that there isn't a class taught in a typical American high school that is called critical race theory, taught an hour a day every day for 5 days a week. Of course, that is not true. That is not typical. However, all throughout our country, critical race ideology, this theory that tries to define who we are as Americans: it tries to define Americans based on race; it tries to explain why we became a Nation; it tries to explain why the American Revolution was fought; it tries to identify who are victims and who are oppressors.

That ideology is absolutely included in training for teachers all across this country. In fact, in just the last 2 weeks we have learned that in two of Virginia's largest blue counties, Fairfax County and Loudoun County, teachers are being trained with critical race ideology to have that permeate all of their teaching through all of their classes. It is the lens through which they are taught to present the material to their students.

In Fairfax County, as a matter of fact, it was shown with a recent article

by the Washington Times, spent \$5.5 million dollars in the past year purchasing CRT-related curriculum and materials for their school system. \$2.5 million of which was for—guess whose son in-law's company—the attorney general, Merrick Garland.

So you have parents rising up saying this is not what we want taught in our schools. Not to mention, these radical transgender policies that infringe upon the rights of the 99.9 percent of students who just want to use the bathroom of their choice with people of their own biological gender.

In Loudoun County, a county that has become notorious around the country because of this, we have a county where they have a male student who goes into the women's restroom and commits sexual assault. It was not exposed as it should have been and dealt with as it should have been. He transferred to another school where another assault takes place.

After that occurs, the parent of the first student victim shows up at a school board meeting, understandably upset, surprisingly restrained from how upset a parent must be. What did we do? We arrest the parent at the school board meeting.

After both of those assaults took place, that very school board passes their official transgender policy allowing male students who want to identify as female students to access those restrooms.

In addition, throughout the country, we are making children, who now we want to vaccinate, they are almost no risk from the China virus, but we are making these children wear masks all day long despite there being almost no evidence that it makes any measurable difference for anyone to wear a mask. To do that to children all day long in a school is nothing short of child abuse.

For this and many other reasons, Virginians across the Commonwealth rose up and said no to that and elected a Governor, a Lieutenant Governor, an attorney general, and a new Virginia House of Delegates that will say no to the radical views of the majority Democrat Party today in Virginia, that is aligned with the radical views on education and otherwise, here in this Chamber and in this town and in this administration.

When I ran for office 2 years ago, I identified immigration, our fiscal situation and our spending, and education as the three most critical issues, the greatest threats to the future of our country. Our children are our most precious resource and they are truly our future. Our children's education is the one thing where those who hold all the levers of power here in Washington and—at least until January—in my home State of Virginia, they tell us: You must pay for it with compulsory taxes, but you have no say in that product that you are purchasing. In fact, the losing—thank God—the losing gubernatorial candidate in Virginia

who was resoundingly rejected, who tried to nationalize the election by bringing in all the heavy-hitters, the former President, the current President, the current Vice President, the losing candidate said: Parents, you got no say. It is none of your business. Give us your money. We will teach your kids. We will decide what they learn. We will decide the policies. If you show up to the school board systems, what we will do is identify you as a domestic terrorist and we will sic the FBI and the attorney general on you. Americans and Virginians said no. They also said no in New Jersey. And they are going to say no throughout this country next year.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the time and effort by my colleague from Illinois (Mrs. MILLER), for leading the charge on this.

So what are we looking at here? Parents, their kids, they have the perfect right to know what is going on in the schools and what the kids will be subject to during those seven or so hours per day that we entrust that system with our kids. Indeed, this is a covenant we have had for many, many years.

Parents and families with the school system, with the government, that they are going to do the things and teach our kids and treat our kids in a way that we approve as parents during those hours a day in those formative years, all those hours they have together that they are not under our direct watch or supervision.

So what is this all about? The direction it is going right now is indeed very disturbing. As we saw last night just across the river over in Virginia, an issue has been brought to a head by two different Governor candidates, and a lot of people going before that, to express their views in a First Amendment fashion to their school boards that they elect to do the job for them.

Over here in Virginia we saw a real ground swell of things that we will be seeing a lot more of across this country. Indeed, we are seeing it in my own district at home. People saying no to what is being forced upon them in my own State by our Governor and a lot of health systems on the vaccine mandate for vaccines that are really unproven still for kids.

In information that I saw today, it says the down-sized vaccine for 5- to 11-year-olds probably doesn't really prevent anything, but it just may lessen their symptoms if they get the virus. Well, maybe parents would like to opt out of that. Maybe that is not something that is good enough for their kids given the offsetting possible risks. It comes back to: Whose kids are they?

Going back to simpler and earlier times when the first settlers of this country came across and were settling in the West, and as the first rough-necks and those went and set up min-

ing and cattle and settling in the West. Settling this Nation. They would then send for people to operate their schools as they got married and started families. A lot of one-room schoolhouses. I know that is not what we have right now, and, oh, he is getting all nostalgic and all that stuff. No.

Could you imagine that those pioneers would put up with the idea that you are not allowed to know what is going on in your school. You are not allowed to know the curriculum. You are not allowed to know what school activities are going on, or the medical or health issues that your kids are going through. Can you imagine that back then? Can you imagine those pioneers, those settlers, those early colonials, even just 50 years ago, can you imagine they would put up with that?

We have been lulled to sleep by allowing the system to do what it does. Well, people are speaking out, they are fighting back, and saying, no, we are not putting up with this anymore because the education system has gotten away from them.

We have seen it. We saw it at the school board meetings in Virginia, and we see it all over the country. I am seeing it my district in northern California. They are going to these meetings and demanding to know what it is you are teaching them.

As my colleague, Representative MILLER, mentioned a little bit ago, it is amazing to watch when the parents—which really takes some guts—stand up publicly and read back to the board some of the content that they are finding in the books that are in the library or even in direct curriculum, with the explicit sexual nature of what is being said and taught to kids at a very young age.

□ 1800

It is outrageous, and it makes everybody in the audience uncomfortable, what is being read off there. My hat is off to those moms and dads who are standing there in public reading these pretty ugly things to the board so they have to face it and so they have to deal with it.

That is putting the spotlight on what this is for many, many people around the country. It is getting people off the sidelines and out of their busy lives. I know it is tough. A lot of families have to do two jobs because of high taxes and all the other demands on them these days, but we have to come off the sidelines.

We are seeing more and more people making different choices for their kids in schools such as charter schools and private schools, whatever it is, because they want the best for their kid.

When you see a homeschool family, a charter school family, or private school parents doing that, they are extra dedicated because they have to make an extra sacrifice to make sure their kids are getting a good education.

And what do we get in this society here of public education?

They make fun of those people. They say: Oh, those kids are awkward, and they don't fit in.

They are some of the best-educated kids you have, Madam Speaker, and they are the ones who are moving forward to be in leadership versus the ones who are not given a school choice to break out of a bad situation.

Especially in our urban areas, wouldn't these inner-city families like to have choices sometimes to alternative education instead of the same thing from the same old standards?

So we are seeing people pushing back, fighting back, and demanding to be heard because your children do not belong to the government. They do not belong to the school system. They belong to you, given to you by God, and they are your responsibility.

So you have every right to have your voice heard, not to be called a terrorist and not to be monitored by the FBI or the Attorney General whose family might be making money off of this or somebody else.

You have every right to speak out. So do not be cowered by the left, by the media, and by the big school system that is trying to cower you into not being a part of it.

You move forward, and you be strong. You demand to know and demand to ask better for your children because they are yours. They do not belong to the government or any education system that is supposed to be working for all of us.

So I appreciate this Special Order hour tonight.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I do have to say that this is not a Republican or Democrat issue. This is an issue that affects all American children.

But where are the Democrat leaders? Why are they not speaking out on this?

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CLYDE).

Mr. CLYDE. Madam Speaker, I thank Congresswoman MILLER for her leadership on this vital issue of protecting education.

In their quest for absolute power, Democrats are not just stopping with doubling the size of the IRS to target Americans, granting mass amnesty for millions of illegal migrants, or imposing burdensome tax hikes on workers and small businesses. No. They also plan to nationalize early education.

The Democrats' \$1.75 trillion Big Government socialist spending bill aims to strip parents of their freedom and hand over more power to bureaucrats and politicians in Washington. Under this irresponsible spending package, the Biden administration obtains total control in approving early childhood education standards while limiting parents' choice in their children's education.

Mark my words, Madam Speaker. The Democrats' reckless reconciliation bill is a shameless ruse to indoctrinate America's youth with divisive curriculum and radical ideas. It is no coincidence that this comes at a time when

the Department of Justice is targeting parents—yes, targeting parents—for exercising their First Amendment rights to speak out against critical race theory curriculum and unscientific mask mandates in schools. No wonder parents across the country are fed up with this nonsense.

Parents are the primary stakeholders in their children's education. It is not the radical left; it is not the Federal Government; and it is not the failed teachers unions. It is parents.

By injecting woke political propaganda into our schools instead of focusing on beneficial subjects such as history, reading, writing, and arithmetic, Democrats are holding children back from a top-tier education.

Additionally, through the Democrats' empty promise guise of affordable childcare, this legislation would actually drive childcare prices through the roof, forcing middle-class families to spend roughly \$13,000 more per year.

Simply put, the Democrats' Big Government, socialist bill has the Federal Government's fingerprints all over education, which is not in accordance with the Constitution, and that should terrify every parent across the country.

This is one of the many reasons why we need to preserve school and parental choice at the local level. It will ensure every solitary student has the opportunity to receive an education that will adequately prepare them for the future and that every solitary parent has the choice to decide where their children receive that education.

Madam Speaker, let's empower parents and not embolden the Federal Government.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. C. SCOTT FRANKLIN).

Mr. C. SCOTT FRANKLIN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I appreciate Congresswoman MILLER's efforts and leadership on this critical and vital topic.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in defense of the God-given right of parents to guide and shape the education of their children. Preparing our children for the world and teaching them the skills they need to be successful adults is not only a parent's right; it is also their responsibility. Unfortunately, it is one of many of our sacred rights that my Democrat colleagues want to rip away and give to the Federal Government.

Having already corrupted our higher education system with anti-American ideology, Democrats are now pushing their indoctrination program down to K-12. This may sound like partisan rhetoric, but my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are hiding their intentions.

Their build back broke plan includes a \$10 billion environmental justice slush fund that will be used to push the Green New Deal in universities. They are incorporating divisive, racist ideologies like critical race theory into classrooms across the country.

They will try to say that is not true. But don't buy their lie. Regardless of

what you name it, Madam Speaker, any curriculum that teaches kids that they are inherently racist or hopelessly victims simply because of the color of their skin is itself racist. It runs counter to the American ideal. That is not freedom of ideas. That is indoctrination.

They are working actively to push parents out of every aspect of their children's education.

Don't believe it.

In Loudoun County, Virginia, just across the river here, any parent wanting to review the CRT components of the curriculum is required to sign a nondisclosure agreement, a legally binding document that forbids them from sharing what they find out.

What is it in their curriculum that they don't want people to find out about it?

And once they find out about it, why don't they want it to be shared?

I come from Florida, a State where we value transparency and the sunshine. We have very strict sunshine laws. This would never fly in the State of Florida. We are not afraid of what our government is doing there. In fact, we want people to know more about it.

The COVID pandemic and our country's response to it will have long-lasting effects on our Nation. Perhaps one of the most destructive of these aspects is the developmental damage inflicted on our children because their needs were placed last.

If there is any silver lining at all to the pandemic, it is that parents whose children were subjected to school shutdowns were finally able to experience firsthand what they are being taught. They responded with anger and frustration at the politicians who have allowed this travesty to occur.

Unfortunately, the Democrat response to this nationwide movement has been to treat concerned parents as domestic terrorists, and they have weaponized the Justice Department in an effort to get these parents to sit down and shut up.

Terry McAuliffe's statement that he doesn't believe parents should tell schools what to teach was a horrifying peer into the soul of what radical progressives truly believe, that Big Brother, the Federal Government, knows best and should be given full autonomy to control our lives.

But Virginians put the Democrats on notice last night. America rejects their efforts to ram through a toxic platform of cradle-to-grave government dependence. This doesn't just include Federal overreach in our education system but also in the outrageous spending programs that will destroy our economic prosperity.

Democrats are trying to sell Americans a bill of goods they don't want, they can't afford, and with money the country doesn't have.

During election years, we often ask the American people how they are doing compared to 4 years ago. I would ask them now: How are you doing compared to 10 months ago?

Our education system is falling apart, our southern border is a disaster, violent crime has skyrocketed across the country, our botched withdrawal from Afghanistan has diminished our standing on the world stage, and inflation is running rampant. Every action the Biden administration takes is hurting our country. Americans know they are worse off, but Democrats appear to be unaware or apathetic.

As I look across the aisle, where are the traditional liberals?

If you are still there, it is time to come out of hiding and stand up to the radical progressives who are destroying the very fabric of the country I know you love. Stop listening to the D.C. and big city echo chambers. Those are not the voice of America.

Show the American people that you are listening to them by standing against divisive rhetoric in our schools, stopping outrageous government spending, and supporting law and order. Yesterday's election should serve as a wake-up call to all who wish to save America from destruction. It is not too late.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to commend the Governor of Florida for the great example he has been to the rest of the States and how he is leading the way in education. We appreciate it.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROSE).

Mr. ROSE. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity.

Madam Speaker, it is time to put our kids first in education. Far-left Democrats who want the government and teachers unions in charge of what children are taught have been working overtime to strip parents of their rights. Within their boondoggle tax-and-spend agenda, Democrats have slipped in a quiet government takeover of our schools. Ultimately, this would ensure Washington bureaucrats and teachers unions have a larger influence on shaping a child's upbringing than their parents.

Under the Democrats' monstrous multitrillion-dollar socialist spending bill is a provision that creates universal daycare and preschool and would allow the government to decide what children are taught, where they will spend their time, and who can teach and care for them.

This is simply wrong. It is not fair, and it violates the trust we put in our schools.

When it comes to their children's education, parents and families deserve more control, not less. We have already seen what government-controlled education looks like as government-run public schools fail to teach children basic skills.

Worse, Democrats are using the public education system to push leftwing ideologies and divisive curricula like critical race theory and the historically inaccurate 1619 Project, which do

nothing but pollute the minds of our young children.

Parents and families deserve schools they can trust. As one of the Representatives for Tennessee and as the father of two young children, I am working to put power back into the hands of parents, families, and local school leaders.

Let's make student welfare and traditional education the only special interest we fund and promote when it comes to our children's schools, not leftwing efforts to turn schools into far left, ideological indoctrination centers.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. To conclude, Madam Speaker, I want to say that we want our children to be smart; we want them to master the core subjects; and we want them to love their neighbor and their country.

Please do not underestimate the power of regular people to defend their children and their country.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1815

TOXIC MILITARY BURN PITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RUIZ. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. RUIZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to tell the story of my constituent, Jennifer Kepner and to call for immediate action on the most pressing public health issue facing our veterans: toxic military burn pits.

Four years ago, I met a veteran named Jennifer Kepner at her home in Cathedral City, California, in my district. Jennifer, a 39-year-old mother of two, was one of the most inspiring and brave people I have ever met, and that kitchen table conversation was one of the most impactful conversations in my life.

When I met her, she was cachectic. You could see her bones. She was wasting away. She was battling pancreatic cancer and was on chemotherapy. You could see the port in her chest and you could see the loss of hair. And she was still so very full of energy inside to tell her story and sound the alarm.

Her doctor linked her exposure to burn pits during her service overseas. You see, she was described as a health nut, as someone thin, healthy, who liked to run, and jog. Her friends would say: She was one of those crazy people who would wake up at 4 in the morning and go on a 5-mile run routinely.

So when she came down with pancreatic cancer at such a young age, her physicians looked at her DNA, her family history, and they concluded that the most likely cause, given her low risk, was her exposure to toxic military burn pit smoke.

I sat with her in her home as she told me her story. She told me about her military service as an Air Force medic caring for our men and women in uniform who were injured or sick. You see, she was stationed at Balad Air Base in Iraq. She told me about her husband and their two children, Adia and Wyatt, who she loved so very dearly.

She told me about burn pits, these huge fields where the military burns trash—anything and everything—including batteries, jet fuel, medical waste, plastics, and other hazardous material causing servicemembers to inhale toxic chemicals, carcinogens, and particulate matter.

They call it the crud, you see, because after a long day in the desert serving our country, they go to their camp wanting a little rest, and they smell this black toxic chemical smoke and they get the soot on their face, in their nostrils, in their throat. They have itchy eyes, a runny nose, a sore throat. They cough, and that is just another day at a base serving our country.

Jennifer spent her last month as a leading voice for her fellow veterans exposed to burn pits which she called “the Agent Orange of our generation.”

Wow. “The Agent Orange of our generation.” We all are infuriated with the way that our Vietnam veterans were denied and their care was delayed and their recognition had been postponed when they were saying, “We are sick.” Their children are born malformed. They are infertile. They have other issues and syndromes and symptoms that are life-threatening and debilitating.

She is saying that this is the Agent Orange of our generation, and she knew that she was going to die. She knew that her days were limited. She knew that pancreatic cancer is the most aggressive cancer that causes death within months after diagnosis.

She didn't give up. She didn't give up, despite the VA denying her the recognition that it was the burn pits that caused her pancreatic cancer. She didn't give up. Despite the VA denying her the benefits that she needed for her family, she didn't give up. Her dying wish was to ensure two things: one, was that other veterans didn't have to struggle through a system that denied and delayed and did not recognize her illness so that she said: Let's help other veterans.

The second was: Please help my husband, Ben, get the benefits to care for my children. In her last dying days she was thinking of others with that heart of a servant and the fierce determination of a warrior.

I remember getting the call when I was in my district office that she was

dying, and she would potentially die within a few hours.

I fell to my knees and I cried. I composed myself and I thought, as a physician, there are only certain things that I can do in the art and science of medicine, but I know that there is a greater healer; that there is a greater power, and perhaps this is what I can bring to serve the family at this moment. So I invited my pastor, Gerald Sharon, to come with me so that we could pray with her on her deathbed.

There she was, taking her last breaths. Her mother was there crying. Her husband was trying to keep it together. Her children were at her side. The youngest one was too young to understand what was happening. The older one, the daughter, was a little more aware, but she was trying to keep it together.

We did our prayer, and she died on October 18, 2017. Since then, it has been my mission to make her vision a reality.

Her story drove me to found the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Burn Pits Caucus with my friend and colleague Congressman BRAD WENSTRUP from Ohio.

Her story inspired me to work with brilliant minds across the aisle like my friend who is sitting here, Representative GUS BILIRAKIS, to introduce legislation in a bipartisan manner.

And her strength inspired me to co-author my bipartisan, bicameral legislation, the Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act, to get veterans the benefits and care they have earned and need and deserve.

Her vision is reflected in the Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins Act, or the Honoring Our PACT Act, which includes my legislation to keep our Nation's promise to our veterans to take care of them after they serve our Nation.

Her stories and the countless stories of other veterans that you will hear today by Republicans and Democrats are speaking to us beyond the grave to act now with urgency for their fellow veterans and for their families. Under the leadership of our great chairman of the VA Committee, Chair MARK TAKANO, we will get this done.

We cannot sit by while the veterans Jennifer served with are denied the healthcare and benefits they have earned and deserve. No one who has served and sacrificed for our Nation should have to face the trials that she endured to get the medical care that she needed, or their widows the benefits to support their families with a life of dignity.

In 1 week, we will celebrate Veterans Day and show our appreciation for all of those who served our Nation in our Armed Forces. Some will wear red, white, and blue attire. Some will even go as far as to make public displays of hugging a flag, and some will always say the same old thing: Thank you to our veterans. Thank you to our veterans for your service.